

International Bible Lessons Commentary ***Leviticus 25:8-12, 25, 35-36, 39-40, 47-48, 55***

International Bible Lessons

Sunday, June 17, 2012

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The **International Bible Lesson** (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, June 17, 2012**, is from **Leviticus 25:8-12, 25, 35-36, 39-40, 47-48, 55**. **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lessons Commentary* (formerly, *Bible Lesson Forum*) below. **Study Hints for Thinking Further** discuss the five questions below to help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion; these hints are available on the **International Bible Lessons Commentary** website. For additional **International Bible Lesson Commentaries**, see the complete and comprehensive **International Bible Lessons Commentary Index**. The weekly **International Bible Lesson** is posted each Saturday before the lesson is scheduled to be taught at **<http://InternationalBibleLessons.org>** and in ***The Oklahoman*** newspaper.

International Bible Lesson Commentary

Leviticus 25:8-12

(Leviticus 25:8) You shall count off seven weeks of years, seven times seven years, so that the period of seven weeks of years gives forty-nine years.

In the Bible, the number seven is a perfect number or a number signifying completeness. Seven days complete a week. Six days after creating the world, God rested on the seventh day. Perhaps as an aid to memory, God told the Hebrews that the Year of Jubilee should begin after a period of seven weeks of years (or 7 times which equals 49 years. Scholars believe the fiftieth year would have been the Year of Jubilee (see Leviticus 25:10-11).

(Leviticus 25:9) Then you shall have the trumpet sounded loud; on the tenth day of the seventh month—on the day of atonement—you shall have the trumpet sounded throughout all your land.

The Year of Jubilee was to begin on the Day of Atonement, which meant that the year began after the Hebrews had made sacrifices for their sins, and their sins had been forgiven by God, and their sins removed from them by the scapegoat. The year would begin a new start for the kingdom of God and for every person.

(Leviticus 25:10) And you shall hallow the fiftieth year and you shall proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you: you shall return, every one of you, to your property and every one of you to your family.

Over the course of the previous 49 years, either from misfortunes or poor choices, individuals, their descendants, and families could have lost their liberty and could have sold (actually leased, because all land belonged to God) their land and even themselves into servitude. The Year of Jubilee meant a new start for everyone, as though they had never lost anything. If applied according to the law of God, the value of “leased” land or “servitude” was to be measured relative to the time of the Year of Jubilee.

(Leviticus 25:11) That fiftieth year shall be a jubilee for you: you shall not sow, or reap the aftergrowth, or harvest the unpruned vines.

The people needed to prepare for the Year of Jubilee by saving part of the produce or part of their earnings from previous years, for they were forbidden to work in their fields by sowing or harvesting. Just as Joseph saved food during seven years of plenty in Egypt to prepare for seven years of famine, if they prepared, God would bless His people so they could enjoy a year without working.

(Leviticus 25:12) For it is a jubilee; it shall be holy to you: you shall eat only what the field itself produces.

The Hebrews were restricted from sowing and reaping (in the sense of sending our harvesters to work their fields); however, just as Jesus’ disciples were allowed to walk into the fields and take what they needed for that meal or for that day, the Hebrews were allowed to do the same and “eat only what the field itself produces). The Hebrews could eat daily directly from the field, which would be a necessity for the poor, who could not save for the future. The time they did not spend working was to be set aside as “extra time” to draw closer to God and learn more about God; it was not to be a time to live in sinful pleasures or idol worship.

Leviticus 25:25

(Leviticus 25:25) If anyone of your kin falls into difficulty and sells a piece of property, then the next of kin shall come and redeem what the relative has sold.

During the previous forty-nine years, some of the Hebrews would have become so poor that they could not prepare for the Year of Jubilee; however, during the Year of Jubilee their property would be returned to them (their property was not to be sold in perpetuity; therefore, many people would call this a lease agreement). They, along with their families were given a new start in life. In other years (other than the Year of Jubilee) a person who had “bought” the land of someone in trouble (for whatever reason) would not be defrauded, if a next of kin paid for the land (or paid the remainder of the “lease” agreement) so the land could be returned to the original owner, a relative or next of kin.

Leviticus 25:35-36

(Leviticus 25:35) If any of your kin fall into difficulty and become dependent on you, you shall support them; they shall live with you as though resident aliens.

The next of kin were to care for their next of kin. The next of kin would understand the real needs of their next of kin in trouble (just as Boaz understood the real needs and integrity of Naomi and Ruth and acted accordingly). If the needs were real (if the next of kin was not “just lazy”), the next of kin knew how best to care for their next of kin. If able, the one who was dependent was supposed to help meet some of the needs of those who cared for them (perhaps as housekeeper, seamstress, or cook) and not become “lazy.” As a “resident alien,” the situation was meant to be temporary.

(Leviticus 25:36) Do not take interest in advance or otherwise make a profit from them, but fear your God; let them live with you.

The next of kin who supported their relatives in difficulty were not to seek to make a profit from their relative who worked to contribute to the needs of the family. Those needing support were supposed to work as God enabled them. Neither the one helped nor the one helping was to abuse or take unjust advantage of the other.

Leviticus 25:39-40

(Leviticus 25:39) If any who are dependent on you become so impoverished that they sell themselves to you, you shall not make them serve as slaves.

Perhaps the one needing support could not earn enough to pay for his or her basic necessities; so, they sell themselves (or “lease” themselves temporarily) as a slave to their relative. This means all of their earnings (or what they would earn working in their relative’s field or home) would go to the relative who was caring for them. If so, they were still to be treated rightly and not taken unjust advantage of.

(Leviticus 25:40) They shall remain with you as hired or bound laborers. They shall serve with you until the year of the jubilee.

Because they were to serve until the Year of Jubilee, the arrangement was meant to be temporary (their land was to be returned to them that year, so they would have their own land to work again). Since prior to the Year of Jubilee, all of their earnings were to go to the relative caring for them, the arrangement was intended to be a temporary. Someday, they would be free again, and the year they would be freed was predetermined as the Year of Jubilee.

Leviticus 25:47-48

(Leviticus 25:47) If resident aliens among you prosper, and if any of your kin fall into difficulty with one of them and sell themselves to an alien, or to a branch of the alien's family,

Resident aliens always resided in the Promised Land. Resident aliens were those not driven out by the Hebrews after they entered the land, or those who later came to live with the Hebrews in the Promised Land. They might prosper in the land they worked, and it might be possible for a Hebrew neighbor to need food or shelter, and so sell himself to his non-Hebrew neighbor.

(Leviticus 25:48) after they have sold themselves they shall have the right of redemption; one of their brothers may redeem them,

Since the Hebrews were to have ultimate control over the land through their judges and later kings, the resident aliens had to abide by the laws of God – the moral laws of God, not the ceremonial laws of God. Therefore, the relative of one who had sold themselves into slavery to a resident alien had the right to purchase and free their relative from slavery. A fair price had to be paid; the next of kin could not just be taken away by force: a “redemption” price had to be paid.

Leviticus 25:55

(Leviticus 25:55) For to me the people of Israel are servants; they are my servants whom I brought out from the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.

God established these laws because the Hebrews were His children, His servants, and God wanted them to treat others rightly (as good examples of God’s ways) and be treated rightly. He wanted them to have the opportunity to be freed from slavery. Whether or not they enslaved themselves to a resident alien or to a relative, they remained children and servants of God. Slavery was voluntary. An impoverished person could choose to sell themselves into slavery to a resident alien, or they could go to a next of kin for help when they were in trouble.

Five Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. Why do you think God established days and years of rest for people, animals, plants, and the land?
2. What are some of the possible consequences when people do not know about or disregard days of rest for themselves and/or others?
3. Why do you think the Year of Jubilee was to begin after the Day of Atonement?

4. Why do you think God gave laws for the caring of needy relatives?
5. In what ways can we make our days of rest more holy to us? What are some benefits of taking extra time and making our rest time more holy to us?

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